

Message Text

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S E C R E T BONN 13406

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2
TAGS: PEPR SOPN UR GW
SUBJECT: REMARKS BY A SOVIET DIPLOMAT ON THE
SCHARANSKY CASE

REF: BONN 13302

1. DURING A CONVERSATION ON OTHER MATTERS (REFTEL),
THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR RAISED WITH A SOVIET
COUNSELOR HERE THE MATTER OF THE SCHARANSKY AND GINSBERG
TRIALS.

2. THE SOVIET COUNSELOR SAID THAT THE PROTECTION
THE WEST EXTENDED TO DISSIDENTS ACTUALLY DAMAGED RATHER
THAN HELPED THEIR CAUSE. HE SAID IT EXACERBATED THE
WISH OF PEOPLE WITHIN THE PARTY TO PROSECUTE
DISSIDENTS BECAUSE THE DISSIDENTS MAKE THEMSELVES
INSTRUMENTS OF A FOREIGN POWER.

3. THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR SAID HE DID NOT CLAIM TO
UNDERSTAND THE DYNAMICS OF THE SOVIET SYSTEM, BUT THAT
IT SHOULD BE PATENTLY OBVIOUS HOW THE TIMING AS WELL AS
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THE SUBSTANCE OF THESE TRIALS WAS DAMAGING SOVIET-
AMERICAN RELATIONS. HE ASKED WHY THESE TRIALS HAD COME
ABOUT AT EXACTLY THE SAME TIME AS A NEW ROUND IN THE
SALT NEGOTIATIONS.

4. THE SOVIET COUNSELOR SAID THAT THE MATTER OF TIMING
OF THESE TRIALS HAD BEEN CONSIDERED VERY CAREFULLY IN

MOSCOW. HE SAID THE PROBLEM WAS RELATED TO BREZHNEV'S VISIT TO BONN IN MAY OF THIS YEAR. THIS HAVING BEEN BREZHNEV'S FIRST VISIT TO THE WEST IN SOME TIME, THE SOVIET UNION WANTED THE VISIT TO BE SUCCESSFUL AND DID NOT WANT IT DAMAGED BY HAVING THE TRIALS HELD AT THAT TIME. THEREFORE, THE ORLOV TRIAL HAD NOT BEEN HELD UNTIL LATER IN MAY AND THE OTHER TRIALS HAD TO BE POSTPONED AS WELL. HOWEVER, WHAT HE TERMED THE "PRESSURE" FOR THESE TRIALS HAD BEEN SO GREAT THAT THEY COULD NOT BE POSTPONED ANY LONGER.

5. THE SOVIET COUNSELOR SAID THAT THIS SHOULD NOT BE INTERPRETED TO MEAN THAT THE SOVIET UNION REGARDED ITS RELATIONS WITH THE FRG AS MORE IMPORTANT THAN ITS RELATIONS WITH THE US. HE SAID THE ISSUE WAS ONE OF PRESIDENT BREZHNEV, AND IT WAS ON THE BASIS OF THE SOVIET DESIRE FOR BREZHNEV TO HAVE A SUCCESSFUL VISIT HERE THAT THE TIMING OF THESE TRIALS HAD BEEN ORIGINALLY BASED.

6. THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR OBSERVED THAT THE TRIALS, ESPECIALLY THE SCHARANSKY TRIAL, SEEMED TO INDICATE LESS SOVIET CONCERN FOR THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, SINCE PRESIDENT CARTER HAD SPECIFICALLY INDICATED THAT SCHARANSKY WAS NOT AN AMERICAN AGENT. THE SOVIET COUNSELOR REPLIED THAT THE SOVIET UNION
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HAD, IN FACT, DONE WHAT IT COULD SO AS NOT TO CONTRADICT THE PRESIDENT DIRECTLY. HE SAID THAT THE COURT JUDGMENT HAD BEEN THAT SCHARANSKY WAS NOT AN AGENT OF THE CIA BUT HAD PASSED INFORMATION TO THE WEST. IF HE HAD BEEN JUDGED AN AGENT, HE WOULD HAVE BEEN EXECUTED.

7. COMMENT: WE ARE UNABLE TO EVALUATE THIS INFORMATION HERE, BEING NEITHER EXPERT ON THE SCHARANSKY MATTER OR ON STANDARD SOVIET LINES REGARDING THE TRIAL. HOWEVER, WE FORWARD THE COMMENTS FOR SUCH VALUE AS THEY MAY HAVE IN HELPING OTHERS PREPARE THEIR ANALYSES.
STOESSEL

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